DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 140 SP 031 200

AUTHOR Kane, Pearl R.
TITLE Attraction to Teaching: A Study of Graduating Seniors at Columbia College and Barnard College. A Pilot Study.
PUB DATE Mar 89
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, March 27-31, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Choice; *College Graduates; Graduate Study; Higher Education; Questionnaires; *Student Attitudes; *Teacher Recruitment; Teacher Salaries; *Teaching (Occupation)

ABSTRACT

This pilot study addressed questions related to teacher recruitment of college graduates. The first part of the study reports the findings of a mail survey designed to gauge the plans of graduating seniors at Columbia College and Barnard College. Part two reports on the findings of a follow-up mail survey of those seniors who said they would consider taking a teaching job in an elementary or secondary school if offered the job. Findings indicated that low salaries and students' plans to attend graduate school were the major obstacles to entry into teaching. The follow-up survey revealed that enthusiasm for teaching does not lead to long-term commitment. The results of the survey indicate that higher pay and more opportunities for job advancement will be necessary to attract and keep well-educated young people in the teaching force. Copies of the two surveys are appended. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED308140

ATTRACTION TO TEACHING:
A STUDY OF GRADUATING SENIORS AT COLUMBIA COLLEGE AND BARNARD COLLEGE
A PILOT STUDY
March 1989

Presented at the 1989 Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
March 27-31, in San Francisco, California

Pearl R. Kane
Assistant Professor
Department of Educational
Administration

Teachers College
Columbia University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P.R. Kane

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP031 200

ATTRACTION TO TEACHING:
A STUDY OF GRADUATING SENIORS AT COLUMBIA COLLEGE AND BARNARD COLLEGE
A PILOT STUDY
March 1989

Bright, well educated, young men and women who have majored in the liberal arts represent the kinds of people that our nation needs to recruit to the teaching force.1 Higher salaries, eased entry through alternative routes to certification, national advertising campaigns and scholarships and loans are some of the strategies being employed to attract these capable young people to our nation's classrooms.

In the rush of reform, little attention has been paid to the job decision process among college seniors graduating from prestigious universtities, who have many career alternatives open to them. With education rising to the top of the national political agenda, and increased incentives to lure young people into teaching, we need to know if interest in teaching has been sparked, what young, liberal arts graduates find attractive about teaching, and whether young people interested in teaching are finding their way into the teaching force.

The study, conducted from January to June, 1988, seeks to address these important questions related to teacher recruitment. Part one of the study reports the findings of a mail survey designed to gauge the plans of graduating seniors at Columbia College and Barnard College (see Appendix A). Part two reports on the findings of a follow-up mail survey of seniors who said they would consider taking a teaching job in an elementary or secondary school if offered the position (see Appendix B).

METHODOLOGY

Using the colleges' mailing lists, an initial survey was mailed to 1202 seniors, questioning them about: post graduation plans; interest and attraction to teaching; whether or not they were actively seeking a teaching job in an elementary or secondary school; their own school backgrounds in terms of the type of secondary school attended, public, parochial or independent; and, the kind of school in which they would like to teach. Thirty two percent of the questionnaires were completed and returned.

For part two of the study, the follow-up survey, responses to one question were used to identify the group of people who said they would consider accepting a teaching job for September (58%). In the follow-up survey, students were asked again if they would consider accepting a job in September, whether they were actively seeking a job; the length of time they would plan to stay in teaching; what they found attractive or unattractive about teaching; and, ratings of importance of various incentives to enter teaching.

The data is analyzed using frequency distributions of responses, and cross tabulations of variables by gender and type of secondary school attended. For the second questionnaire, administered to those students who said they would consider accepting a teaching job if offered, frequency distributions and cross tabulations are reported, as well as mean ratings on the importance of variables related to job attraction, and incentives to enter teaching. Most of the statistics reported are descriptive. Where tests of significance are used they are indicated.

For the initial survey, access to students was provided through the offices of the deans of Columbia College and Barnard College. Only one mailing was permitted. Consequently, strategies designed to increase response rates, such as additional mailings and phone calls, were not possible; nor was it possible, given restricted access to the population, to determine whether respondents differed significantly on relevant characteristics. Response rate for the second questionnaire was respectable (42%), given that it was administered during the last two weeks of the semester.

In designing the questionnaire, students were interviewed to determine the questions, and suggestions were solicited from the career services offices. The questionnaire was piloted prior to administration.

Part I

Findings: INITIAL SURVEY

Of the 1202 surveys mailed to seniors at Columbia and Barnard, 32 percent were completed and returned. Sixty-nine percent of those responding were female, and 31 percent were male. As Columbia College is coeducational and Barnard is a single sex school for women, the response rate by gender closely approximates the gender distribution of the combined senior classes.

Plans Following Graduation

Graduating seniors were asked what they planned to do following graduation. The majority of students planned to work (58%), a smaller number (12%) planned to work and attend graduate school, and almost a quarter of the graduating class (22%) planned to attend graduate school full time. Of those planning to work, most were considering jobs in finance (39%) or business (37%), with jobs in the human services, publishing and public service each being considered by approximately 20 percent of the students seeking employment immediately following graduation. The sum excedes 100 percent since respondents were all asked to list more than one choice. No significant difference in post-graduation plans could be attributed to the gender of the responding seniors.

Interest in Teaching

Graduating seniors were asked if they had ever considered teaching in elementary or secondary school after graduating from college, and whether they would consider accepting a teaching job in an elementary or secondary school for the September following graduation.

The most surprising finding of the survey was that 58% of the respondents reported that during their undergraduate years they considered entering teaching. Of these graduating seniors, 81 percent said that they would consider taking a teaching job if offered. Despite an interest in teaching, when seniors were asked if they would definitely be seeking a teaching position for the Fall, only 12% said they would.

The reasons given for considering teaching are consistent with findings of other studies of factors that attract people to teaching. Most seniors responding to the survey cited an enjoyment in working with young people (77%), and a desire to help others (69%). Approximately half cited academic interest (47%) as the reason for considering teaching.

Men were as likely to cite these attractions as women. However, there was a significant difference (.05) in the percentage of male students who said they had considered teaching (70%), as compared to their female colleagues (57%). The difference was not sustained when seniors were asked if they would accept a job.

Lack of Interest in Teaching

Poor salary was cited most often (54%) as the reason seniors would not consider a job in teaching. Factors less frequently cited were the lack of a challenge (28%) and low

status (26%). Several students noted that the absence of promotional opportunities was a further deterrent.

Differences Among Seniors Who Attended Public or Private High Schools

Forty percent of the respondents had attended private high school (independent or parochial), approximating the number of public and private high school graduates in the senior class. There were no significant differences between public and private high school graduates in plans to work or attend graduate school following graduation.

Types of Teaching Jobs Graduating Seniors Would Consider

Forty two percent of the graduating seniors responding said they would only consider teaching in a high school, and 18 percent said they would only consider teaching in an elementary school. Forty percent of the respondents would consider teaching at either the elementary or high school level. Forty-five percent said they would teach in a public or independent school and 30 percent said they would only consider teaching in a public school.

Part II

Findings: FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

A follow-up questionnaire was sent to respondents to the initial survey who said that during their undergraduate years they considered teaching in an elementary or secondary school (189 students or 58%). This included seniors who said they were definitely seeking a teaching position (12%), those who said they would consider accepting a job for September, but were not definitely seeking a position (35%) and those who said they had considered teaching but would not accept a teaching position following graduation (11%).

Out of a total number of 189 questionnaires, forty-two percent were completed and returned. Consistent with the response pattern of the initial questionnaire, 67 percent of those responding were female and 33 percent were male which reflected the gender distribution of the sample population.

Interest in Teaching

The second questionnaire attempted to gauge whether interest in teaching was sustained. Respondents were asked if they would accept an offer to teach in an elementary or high school in September following graduation. Sixty-nine percent of those responding said they would accept a teaching job. Men were as likely to accept a teaching job as women. However, only 8% of the respondents indicated that they were actively seeking a teaching job.

Respondents were asked to indicate the length of time they would plan to remain in teaching using forced choice categories that included: "less than 3 years", "4 to 10 years", "until retirement", or, "until I found another job." Seventy-eight percent said they would teach for less than 3 years, 5 percent said they would remain until they found another job, and 11 percent indicated a commitment of 4 to 10 years. Only 6 percent of those responding indicated that teaching would be a long-term occupation.

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of various factors in attracting them to teaching, using a scale of 5 (most important) to 1 (not at all important). Using mean ratings to determine relative attractions to teaching, graduating seniors ranked "teaching young people is important" as the greatest attraction (3.9), with the intrinsic satisfaction of teaching (3.8), making an impact on other people's lives (3.7) and liking children (3.7) also ranking high in importance. On each of these items, there was no gender based difference between the responses.

Factors Preventing Entry Into Teaching

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of factors in keeping them from accepting a teaching job using the scale of 5 (most important) to 1 (least important).

Mean ratings indicate that plans to attend graduate school and low salary were the major obstacles to accepting a job in teaching. Women appear to place more importance on attending graduate school immediately following college than their male colleagues. Men appear to place more importance on salary than women.

When categories of "most important" and "very important" are combined for each of the variables, low salary (45%); limited job mobility (38%), which respondents may have interpreted as limited job advancement; concern with teacher certification (36%); and, not knowing how to find a teaching job (33%) emerge as the deterrents to accepting a teaching job. Women were as concerned about the drawbacks of job mobility, teacher certification, and the difficulty of finding a job as men.

Factors that received a low response rate, indicating that they were unimportant obstacles to accepting a teaching job, may provide useful information about the way in which teaching is perceived. Seniors interested in teaching were not concerned about previous experience in teaching; nor were they concerned that teaching was too demanding, indicating that seniors either perceive teaching as easy work or that they are not reluctant to work hard. Two-

thirds of the respondents indicated that the demands of teaching are "not important," or only "somewhat important."

Incentives to Accepting a Teaching Job

The overwhelming majority of respondents (74%) said they would be drawn to teaching if they were awarded partial scholarships for graduate or professional schools, as indicated by the mean rating of 4.0, the highest for any variable on the survey instrument. This is true for both men and women.

The incentive ranked second in importance, obtaining certification while working in a school, received a mean rating of 3.6, and was considered "most important" or "very important" by over half of those responding to that question. On-campus recruiting was identified as another important incentive, ranked "most important" or "very important" by over half of the respondents of equal concern to men and women.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results indicate that there is a sizable group of graduating seniors (189 students) who considered teaching in an elementary or secondary school after graduation. This yields a conservative estimate of 16 percent when applied to the entire graduating class. The actual figure is likely to be higher.

Graduating seniors at Columbia and Barnard who are actively looking for teaching jobs, or who would consider accepting a job if offered, are motivated by an enjoyment in working with young people and a desire to do something worthwhile. They consider teaching important work and want to help others. Contrary to popular beliefs about the nation's current college population, respondents to the questionnaire in one prestigious institution of higher learning value intrinsic satisfaction and care about making an impact on other people's lives. When asked to give reasons why they had considered or not considered teaching in an elementary or secondary school seniors more often cited attractions to teaching over the drawbacks of the profession.

An enthusiasm for teaching does not lead to long term commitment. Perhaps it is the meager compensation and absence of job advancement, cited by respondents, that serve as disincentives to a career in teaching. Over three-fourths of the graduating seniors responding to the survey said they would accept a teaching job for a period of 3 years or less, and a substantial proportion (74%) would be lured by partial scholarships to graduate and professional schools.

Over half of those responding said that obtaining certification while working would serve as an incentive, which may imply that some would stay. More important, a temporary commitment should be viewed as an opportunity to acquaint young people with the challenges and satisfactions of the teaching job. In a recent study of teachers in public and private schools in New Jersey, almost half of the teachers said they did not consider making teaching a career when they first entered.2 If young people find the working conditions of teaching satisfying, those who enter with the intent to stay for a few years may find it hard to leave the job.

The results of the survey indicate that higher pay and more opportunities for job advancement will be necessary to attract and keep well educated young people in the teaching force. Policies designed to acknowledge and reward different levels of mastery, including differentiating the structure of schools and creating a National Board of Standards, should receive careful consideration.3

The willingness of large numbers of liberal arts graduates to teach for a short period of time points to the possibility of a teacher corps, the equivalent of a domestic peace corps, as one approach. A temporary teaching force may allow able young people to enter teaching, bringing their enthusiasm and talents for a few years, before they opt for more lucrative careers in other fields. A temporary force may also provide a way to attract minorities into our urban schools. While some of the best young people who entered with prospects of teaching for only a few years may decide to stay in teaching, others who leave will benefit the profession by becoming education minded citizens, more involved and supportive of educational efforts.

Policies designed to attract bright young people into teaching may be missing out on a basic problem related to the way college seniors find out about jobs. Over half of the respondents noted that on-campus recruiting would provide an incentive to taking a teaching job, and one-third said that they didn't know how to go about locating a teaching job. When IBM, Citicorp and Morgan Trust recruit on the Columbia campus, they announce their visit by display ads in the Spectator, the Columbia daily newspaper, inviting candidates to a reception where they learn about career options over wine and cheese. No such announcements have appeared for school systems where the need for talented people may be greater. The desultory way in which college students find out about jobs in teaching deserves greater attention.

This case study, conducted on a pilot basis, will be repeated in 1989, with additional opportunities for mailings to increase the response rate. A study of interest in

teaching among graduating seniors who are liberal arts majors in one university may shed light on similar problems and possibilities among liberal arts majors at other colleges and universities.

1. "Universities Asked to Help Reform Teacher Education," Chronicle of Higher Education, V. XXXII, N. 6, 19 April 1986:29; see also Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group (East Lancing, MI: The Holmes Group Inc., 1986) 14-20.

2. Pearl R. Kane, Teachers in Public and Independent Schools: A Comparative Study, (New York: Klingenstein Center, 1986),63

3. Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group,36-41; and,62-69; and, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century, The Report of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (New York: The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986),62-69.

APPENDIX A: INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Name_____ Local Phone_____

Local Address _____

1. Do you expect to graduate in May 1988?

   ___ yes ___ no

   If you do not expect to graduate, do not answer any additional questions. Please return the questionnaire in the envelope provided.

2. What do you plan to do following graduation?

   ___ work
   ___ attend graduate school
   ___ other_____
   please explain

3. What type of high school did you attend? ___ public ___ independent ___ parochial

4. During your undergraduate years, have you ever considered teaching elementary or secondary school after graduating?

   ___ yes ___ no

   Please indicate your reasons.

5. Why?

   ___ academic interests
   ___ enjoy working with young people
   ___ desire to help others
   other_____
   _____

   Why not?

   ___ poor salary
   ___ low status
   ___ absence of challenge
   other_____
   _____

6. If you were offered a teaching job in an elementary or secondary school for next September, would you consider taking it?

   ___ yes ___ no

7. Please indicate the level, school type and subject(s) you would like to teach.

   ___ K-8 ___ 9-12
   ___ public ___ independent ___ parochial
   subjects_____

8. Will you definitely be seeking a teaching position for fall 1988?

   ___ yes ___ no

9. If you are planning to work in the Fall 1988, what other types of employment are you considering?

   _____
   _____
   _____

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX B: FOLLOW UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____ Local Phone _____

Local Address _____

1. Would you accept an offer to teach in an elementary or high school in September? ___Yes ___No

2. If you did accept a teaching job in an elementary or high school, for how long would you stay in teaching?

   ___3 years or less ___4-10 years ___until retirement ___until I found another job

3. Are you actively seeking a teaching job? ___Yes ___No

Below you will be asked to rate the importance of various factors on a scale of 1 to 5.

5=Most Important 4=Very Important 3=Moderately Important 2=Somewhat Important 1=Not at all Important

4. If you are still considering a teaching job please indicate which of the following you have done using the rating scale of 5 to 1.

   ___registered for teaching jobs with career services
   ___contacted friends and relatives for leads
   ___registered with a teaching placement agency
   ___sent my resumé to schools
   ___responded to newspaper ads about teaching jobs
   ___other (please explain) _____

5. Rate the importance of the following in attracting you to teaching using the rating scale of 5 to 1.

   ___I like kids
   ___our nation needs teachers
   ___teaching young people is important
   ___making an impact on other people's lives
   ___I enjoy academics
   ___teaching people is intrinsically satisfying
   ___teaching allows time to pursue other interests
   ___other (please explain)_____

6. Rate the importance of the following in keeping you from accepting a teaching job using the rating scale of 5 to 1.

   ___attending graduate school
   ___found a job I prefer
   ___salary is too low
   ___limited job mobility
   ___concerned with teacher certification
   ___don't know how to find a teaching job
   ___other (please explain) _____
   ___don't have enough expertise to teach
   ___teaching is too demanding
   ___schools do not recruit on campus
   ___working conditions in most schools are poor
   ___difficult to find a teaching job
   ___want a more prestigious job

7. Rate the importance of each of the following as incentives to accepting a teaching job using the rating scale of 5 to 1.

   ___on-campus teacher recruitment
   ___getting certified while working in a school
   ___a teacher corps program in the U.S. like the Peace Corps
   ___partial scholarships for graduate school for having taught in public schools
   ___graduate/professional school scholarships for current or former teachers
   ___guaranteed summer employment in business
   ___other _____

8. Additional Comments: _____

_____

Thank You For Completing This Form